



## FORT VANCOUVER REGIONAL LIBRARY DISTRICT

Serving Clark, Skamania, Klickitat Counties and parts of Cowlitz County ■ Bruce Ziegman, Executive Director

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ELC mtg  
BT

March 6, 2006

Bob Watt and Regina Jones, Co-Chairs  
c/o Karen Tvedt, Executive Director  
Early Learning Advisory Committee  
PO Box 43113  
Olympia, WA 98504-3113

Dear Committee Co-Chairs:

The Early Learning Council has laid out a challenging vision: to create a sustainable, integrated and accessible early learning system for Washington State. Public libraries have well-established programs and services that support the early learning efforts of this Council. We are writing to provide you with information about the assets we bring to local communities across the state and to initiate a conversation about ways we see public libraries can be incorporated into the early learning system.

Public library investments in early learning include both services directly to parents and caregivers as well as partnerships with agencies and organizations that serve these audiences.

Direct services may include:

- Developmental and age appropriate materials to support the early literacy efforts of parents, caregivers and early childhood programs. These may include board books, picture books, music, manipulatives and other literacy handouts. Many libraries offer pre-packaged theme packets suitable for parents and caregivers to use with their children.
- Programs that support and promote language-rich environments. These include story times for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, their families and caregivers. These may be offered in a variety of settings including libraries, childcare facilities of all kinds, family resource centers and subsidized housing sites.
- Trained staff modeling early literacy activities in programs that incorporate the six pre-reading skills every child must have to be ready to learn to read: print motivation, print awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, phonological awareness and letter knowledge.
- Trainers who can provide training for parents and caregivers about the aforementioned six pre-reading skills; what they are and how to incorporate them into daily life. A grant from the Paul Allen Foundation will increase the number of libraries across the state able to offer *Every Child Ready to Read @ your library* programs in their communities. This may include STARS credit.

- Trainers who can provide training for parents and caregivers on brain development and the importance of early learning. This may include STARS credits.
- Public awareness materials to inform the community of the importance of early brain development and early learning.

Partnerships may include:

- The range that varies with the unique characteristics of local communities. These may include the local Child Care Resource & Referral, Head Start, Early HeadStart and ECEAP programs, health departments, Education Service Districts, community college ECE programs, clinics, preschool programs, and other local collaboratives.

Public libraries are great equalizers. Through the public library every family, regardless of income, is able to experience a language-rich environment at no cost. Libraries provide encouragement for making reading and language interactions part of the community's daily routine, and assure that a range of culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate material is available to even the smallest, most remote areas. Children not part of the childcare community are able to receive the same pre-literacy benefits available from quality childcare through free public library services, programs and materials.

We encourage the Early Learning Council to adopt recommendations that recognize the contributions of existing, local organizations to meet the goals established by the state. We ask that the Council develop policies and funding models that support the efforts and infrastructure already in place. Local libraries provide early learning training to families and caregivers. They make a substantial contribution to the support of a language-rich environment, and library programs provide opportunities for all families, regardless of whether they choose to access childcare or not.

We believe the commitment to families and caregivers already demonstrated by public libraries across the state can be enhanced and expanded in a collaborative environment. We look forward to working with the Early Learning Council, with the State, and with other organizations in our local communities to make the vision of a high-quality early learning system a reality.

Please contact us if you would like more information.

Sincerely,



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